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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

3 August 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Henry Holland, Esq.
Assistant Secretary of State
Latin American Affairs

SUBJECT: Proposal of Combined Department of State and
CIA for Action to Exploit Asylee Situation in
Guatemala

1. Situation: The reduction of the Asylee problem by the Guatemalan Government has not been effected. Propagandistic exploitation has not on the other hand succeeded in turning the Asylee situation against international communism.
2. Objective: To exploit one aspect of Asylee situation in such a way as further to associate the Asylees and Arbenz Regime with Moscow.
3. Method: A diplomatic appeal by the Guatemalan Government to the Governments of the USSR and Mexico, asking the former to receive the Asylees. NB.
4. Concept: We do not really believe Moscow will accept Asylees or that they themselves would wish to go to Russia. However, irrespective of what results from this action we would have at least one net gain, viz: a diplomatic linking of Moscow with the former Guatemalan Commies and even to some extent, Arbenz as Kremlin agents.

Assuming that the Russians decline to invite or to accept the Guatemalan Communists then we have another excellent propaganda gambit, viz: "See what happens to Moscow's unsuccessful agents and operatives." In this circumstance, propaganda would follow up by recalling the fate of Spanish communists who did go to Russia. (CIA) For Latin American consumption, the El Campesino story could be revived. (CIA) Some public action might be taken by him. (CIA)

NB This does not alter our basic policy which seeks that the Asylees be brought to trial in Guatemala and that on the other hand none of them be allowed to spread mischief abroad, particularly in other Latin American countries.

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5. Proposed Plan: Cause Guatemala to address a diplomatic appeal to the Mexican Government and simultaneously to the Russian Embassy in Mexico. (Department of State) In the first note Mexico would be requested to grant safe-conduct to the communists in their Embassy via Mexico to the USSR. This note would also inform the Mexicans of a request to the Russians to accept these people.

The communication to the Soviets would probably have to be delivered by the Mexicans. In any case it should contain a request for the Russians to accept and receive back their agents and representatives. Obviously this is the key note and should be carefully worded to get the best propaganda impact. With this in mind, the note should, in fairly subtle language, make reference to the countless visits and periods of residence of Fortuny, Pellecer, Gutierrez, et al, to Moscow and it should be suggested that in view of the close friendship and support thus evidenced, the most happy place of disposition would appear to be the USSR (See Attachment A). Shortly after the delivery of these notes, the Guatemalan Government should make them simultaneously public. All U.S. official media and a few reliable newspapers should be given an advance tip-off. (USIA and CIA) Consideration should be given to alerting IRD to the forthcoming development. (CIA)

6. Estimate of Feasibility:

a. "As regards sending asylees to Russia or other iron curtain countries, Padilla Nervo said that they would be glad for any solution that leaves these people in Guatemala or sends them elsewhere than to Mexico. They will be guided throughout by the provisions of the Montevideo and Havana conventions on asylum and if Guatemala gives a safe conduct for Russia and Russia agrees to receive them, Mexico will be happy to turn them over for that purpose." (Embtel from Mexico City to Department, #111 of July 27 - excerpt).

b. "As regards Communist asylees, Asensio stated Foreign Office had persuaded Salvadoran Ambassador ask Guatemala to make arrangements for transporting Communists in his Embassy to points behind iron curtain. It is planned that he make this suggestion in writing, and Guatemalan Government will immediately respond offering safe conducts on this condition. As inducement, Guatemalans are offering pay transportation expenses and Asensio said US assistance in arranging transportation would undoubtedly be needed." (Embtel from Guatemala City, #130 of July 28 - excerpt).

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c. Juan Cordova Cerna has discussed the feasibility of such action and has expressed enthusiasm and confidence in his ability to convince Castillo Armas of the desirability of such action.

7. Conclusion: In view of collateral action being taken by or agreeable to the Governments of Mexico and Salvador and in view of Cordova Cerna's attitude, the plan is readily feasible. CIA has in a state of readiness the propaganda outlets appropriate to exploitation of this proposal. Details of propaganda exploitation by CIA will be the subject of another memorandum.

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FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director, Plans

Attach: Chart of Guatemalan Communists
Travelling to USSR and Satellites

WHD []

3 August 1954

Orig & 1 - Addressee

2 - Signing Official ✓

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